

Duckworth Helps Introduce Bill to Provide Desperately Needed Funding for Home and Community-Based Services, Hazard Pay

December 8 2020 3:09 PM



WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) helped U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) introduce the *HCBS Relief Act*, legislation that would provide increased funding for home and community-based services (HCBS) as people with disabilities face exponentially higher death rates from COVID-19. The bill would provide dedicated Medicaid funds for HCBS, reducing the need for people with disabilities and older adults to move into congregate settings and allowing them to receive the services and supports they need in their own homes. U.S. Representative Debbie Dingell (D-MI-12) is introducing companion legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“Seniors and people with disabilities—who have already been disproportionately impacted by this deadly pandemic—should not be forced to abandon their home services for dangerous group settings where there are far higher risks of illness and death,” Duckworth said. “We must do our best to protect the dignity, health and financial stability of these Americans during this challenging time, which is why I’m proud to be helping Senator Casey introduce this critical legislation that allocates desperately-needed funding for Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services.”

“We have an obligation to support and protect older adults and people with disabilities by providing the dollars needed to maintain home and community based services, so that people can receive care in their own homes. We also must support essential workers with the resources they need to do their jobs effectively and safely,” said Casey. “It is crucial that any future COVID relief package include dedicated funding for HCBS.”

“This pandemic hasn’t just created unique challenges for seniors and people with disabilities, it has exploited existing flaws in our entire long-term care system,” said Dingell. “Through the COVID HCBS Relief Act, we can ensure seniors and people with disabilities can live with dignity in the home and in the community by improving access to high quality long-term services and supports. Beyond those critical measures, this legislation will invest in the home care workforce that will meet this pressing need. Especially as Congress debates COVID-19 relief for our communities, we cannot ignore the urgent need to strengthen HCBS across our country.”

The COVID HCBS Relief Act would provide a 10 percent Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) increase to states to be used to enhance HCBS. Funds can be used to support frontline workers with increased pay, paid sick and family medical leave and personal protective equipment. The extra dollars also can be used to support family caregivers, pay for recruitment and training of additional direct care workers and buy technology to facilitate services. Additionally, these funds can help provide services for the more than 800,000 people on state HCBS waiting lists.

This past June, Duckworth [condemned](#) the Senate Republican COVID-19 relief proposal that attacked the disability community by failing to provide funding for Medicaid Home and Community Based Services. She also [delivered](#) a floor speech and [wrote](#) an op-ed criticizing the proposal.

The COVID HCBS Relief Act is cosponsored by U.S. Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Tina Smith (D-MN), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Gary Peters (D-MI), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Jack Reed (D-RI), Ed Markey (D-MA), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT).

Read more about the COVID HCBS Relief Act [here](#).